

ACTIVITIES AND DIVERSIONS

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OLD age can be one of the busiest and most creative periods of life when one is guided by the motto: "So much to do and so little time to do it." I shall soon celebrate my 75th birthday, and although I have never been physically rugged I have recovered from two small strokes. Following a retirement from the practice of surgery and becoming an emeritus professor, I return to the hospital only on invitation or on some special occasion.

Many years ago my mother-in-law gave me an important guideline: "Never economize on books—your book bill should be as large as your meat bill." One of my friends saves entire newspapers. I prefer limited clippings—limited, that is, to not more than two subjects. At present the two subjects are: the Arab-Israeli conflict and university unrest. The quest for these two items carries me through the daily papers and several monthly journals.

However, reading and walking our two dogs is not enough; I also write—not for publication, although Lippincott is now wrestling with a book on my experiences in World War II.* Since completing this I have turned to what I call "Autobiographical Topics." One can sit indefinitely with pen in hand wondering how to organize an autobiography but not making any marks on paper. A "topic" affords a limited and circumscribed subject. For example: three summers (1915-1917) at the Biological Laboratory in Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, provide a manageable task.

I also compile a series of sketches of people I have known rather intimately. These are called "Vignettes" and include former teachers, academic associates, and professional acquaintances. The series can be extended almost indefinitely.

Books and poems were part of childhood memories, for example:

*Churchill, E. D.: *Surgeon to Soldiers*. Philadelphia, New York, Toronto, Lippincott. In press. The concluding paragraphs of this paper are quoted from this forthcoming publication by permission of the publisher.

The House of Seven Gables, which was read to me when I had "yellow jaundice." Hymns and sacred songs are deeply ingrained as a result of childhood experience.

I have mentioned my reconstruction of events in World War II and give the following account of a day in Florence, Italy, more than 25 years ago. This was reconstructed with the aid of a very few notes in a diary kept at the time.

A stop on the roadside for lunch never failed to draw a crowd of children in Italy, and this was what happened on 19 March (1945) when Otto Aufranc, Gene Sullivan and I were on our way to Rome. The 6th G. H. was celebrating the departure of Tom Goethals with a farewell party. Charlie Short and Gene launched a long discussion about Quintus Horatius Flaccus but were unable to recall the circumstances surrounding his death in 8 B.C. Some doubt was expressed that he had died! As the evening grew chilly the session moved to Bartlett's room.

Sully and I continued north on Route 2, making a detour to Orvieto to see the bas-relief on the cathedral that portrays the creation of Eve. This is one of the few portrayals of this event that pictures God acting as a technician. He is bending over Adam and grasping his rib. Orvieto, as seen across the valley, was one of the finest cities of Italy, untouched by the war and by the industrial age. There was not a factory chimney on the skyline and the valley contained the vineyards that produce the sweet, white Orvieto wine. We were disappointed in our call on Eve, for the bas-relief was packed away behind a bombproof ramp put up to protect the lower facade of the cathedral.

Route 2 leads over Radicofani at the top of the pass—the impertinent stronghold of an ancient robber baron. In Florence to the Excelsior Hotel where we joined Hugh Cairns and Allen Stammers for dinner. After dinner Shoreston invited a few of us to hear Tito Ruffo sing. In my college days I had heard Tito Ruffo in his prime as a member of the Chicago Opera Company. This concert was offered by the Maestro as a token to Shoreston for some professional courtesy.

Somewhere in Florence we entered a small apartment with a portable Victor phonograph on the center table. The Maestro,

then an elderly man with white hair, played Red Seal records made by his full, rich baritone voice of 30 or more years before. He first sang in *Faust* in Covent Garden in 1901! As we saw him in Florence he was over 70 years of age.

Tito Ruffo leaned over the disc and listened intently to every phrase. At times his lips moved noiselessly. How fortunate, I thought, to be able to recapture at the age of 70 one's own performance at the prime of life! Surgeons make their recordings on more perishable material than wax.

The stimulus to come to Florence at this time was a neuro-surgical conference which opened on the 21st of March at the 24th General Hospital.